R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 015 073 RC 002 137

ADJUSTMENT OF RURAL YOUTH TO URBAN ENVIRONMENTS.

BY- BATTLE, MARK

PUB DATE 23 OCT 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.28 5P.

DESCRIPTORS- *EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, *PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT, PERSONAL INTERESTS, *RURAL YOUTH, RURAL URBAN DIFFERENCES, SELF CONCEPT, URBAN YOUTH, *YOUTH EMPLOYMENT, YOUTH AGENCIES, *YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES, YOUTH PROGRAMS,

WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF RURAL YOUTH ARE FOUND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM FARMS, MIGRANT STREAMS, SMALL COMMUNITIES, AND ISOLATED HILLS IN APPALACHIA. YET, A COMMONALITY FOUND IS THAT THEY ARE YOUTH AND AS SUCH THEY SHOULD BE DEALT WITH AS TOTAL PERSONS AND NOT AS GROUPS. GOOD EMPLOYMENT PREPARATION PROGRAMS, SUCH AS THE U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S PACKAGE, SHOULD BE COMPREHENSIVE, YET PEOPLE-ORIENTED. THE SUCCESS OF ANY YOUTH, RURAL OR URBAN, IN FINDING A SATISFYING ROLE IN LIFE IS NOT DEPENDENT UPON HIS BACKGROUND AS MUCH AS THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE AND WILL INFLUENCE HIM. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (SF)

-2

ED015073

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Speech presented at
NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE
ON RURAL YOUTH
October 23-26, 1967
Washington, D. C.

General Session

RECEIVED
JAN 5 1968
NMSU
E.R.I.C.

ADJUSTMENT OF RURAL YOUTH TO URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

Mark Battle
Administrator, Bureau of Work Programs
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C.

I was both pleased and honored by the invitation to speak with you today. But after looking at my part in the program, I began to have certain reservations. The topic assigned to me was "Adjustment of Rural Youth to Urban Environments."

At first glance, this subject seemed both pertinent and immediate for many young people growing up in the rural areas and smaller communities of our country.

But the more thought I gave to my assigned topic, the more I became concerned. First I was concerned about the word adjustment. Should the present day needs of youth be relegated to "adjustment?" People "adjust" to severe physical handicaps, but that certainly never justifies the handicap. My concern is that adjustment does not suggest recognizing the need and the opportunity for a two-way kind of accommodation that involves both individuals and society.

Second, I was concerned about the prospect of confining my discussion to rural youth alone.

The question which immediately sprang out at me was -- is the sense of isolation, of alienation, any greater for the rural youth, newly come to the city, than for the city youth who has essentially lived in a foreign country as far as his ability to deal with the system of that city is concerned?

You may suspect I'm using the old evasive trick of talking for thirty minutes on "Why I Can't Speak on My Topic." I assure you, I do intend to share with you an idea related to my assigned topic. However, it is precisely because of this idea that I want to change the frame of reference.

I think it is an exercise in futility to think of youth primarily as urban or rural.

We could spend all of our time and dissipate all of our energies trying to agree on what we mean by these terms.

RC 002 137

Mark Battle

For instance, take the term "rural youth." What does this mean? It's easy to agree to tag as "rural" any young person coming directly off a farm. And there aren't many left. How should you classify the young person who grows up in a small town in a predominantly agricultural area? Is he rural or semi? What about the youth who was born on a farm, moved with his family at age 12 to a small town and took off for the big city at age 16?

More important than any of these definitions even is the question of how do these youths classify themselves?

I think, that if we who are gathered here today, explored these questions, we would come up with many different points of view--each one with some measure of validity, but not much farther ahead in terms of dealing with youth problems.

A similar problem exists if we here were to attempt to define in terms of size the idea of urban. Most of us would include as urban something more than the 20 largest cities in the United States. However, most of us--when we speak of "city problems" -- are thinking primarily about these very large cities.

I don't believe that many of us would accept the Census Bureau's definition of urban. By that definition any incorporated town with over 2,500 people is urban. By that definition, I grew up in an urban area. But my home town of Bridgeton, New Jersey; then population 18 to 20 thousand, was definitely not urban and its whole economy was based on the surrounding farms. I considered myself a farm boy--with due apologies to the Census Bureau.

Even agreement on the definition of urban and rural would not provide any overall answers helpful to the rural youngster who moves to an urban environment.

We might agree to classify as "non-urban," poor black youths off tenant farms in the South; white youths from isolated hills in Appalachia; Spanish-speaking migrant youths who've been constantly on the move, and youths who grew up, as did their fathers and grandfathers before them, on farms and in small towns in the midwest.

But where does that lead anyone? Certainly not to the conclusion that the non-urban backgrounds of these young people make for a hard and fast rural homogeneity.

The fact is, despite literature to the contrary, not all rural youths are poorly equipped to get and hold jobs in metropolitan areas. Not all rural youths are poorly educated and motivated. The fact is that rural youths do not share a common heritage or even a common language.

Mark Battle

Preliminary findings of a Bureau of Work Programs research contractor indicate that in the upper Midwest, the rural youths who migrate into the cities are the "cream" of the rural crop. These same tentative findings disclose that urban employers often prefer these rural youths over city youth because they believe these youths are better equipped for the available jobs.

The only characteristic common to most rural youths who migrate to urban areas is that they left their home areas because they desired better opportunities. The degree of capability which was developed in the rural context is not of primary import.

The kid who grows up in the urban ghetto shares this desire for opportunity. If he doesn't move on--it's probably because he doesn't see any place to go.

On the other hand, whether from urban or rural areas, all youth do share one characteristic. It is a very obvious characteristic. And it is a very binding characteristic. It is a characteristic that exists despite the uniqueness of each individual. The characteristic is, of course, youth itself.

May I submit that youths--because they are youths--are more alike in their needs than different. May I submit further that our common objective to help prepare youths to become self-sufficient, self-respecting adults must be based on understanding these common needs and these common growth tasks, no matter the label rural or urban. And perhaps the best way to help youths obtain appropriate adult status is to focus planning and program on these shared needs.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not underestimating individual differences. Rather, I am emphasizing that it is individuals--and not groups--who will require different kinds of preparatory inputs to become self-sufficient.

These special inputs, whether the need is for a unique system to deliver a traditional service or for an innovative service that can be delivered in a traditional fashion--should be an integral part of the total array of opportunities provided for all young people both rural and urban.

Throughout this country, over the past years, many people have focused on the needs of youth in our contemporary society. We have learned a great deal.

One of the most important things we have learned is that most people, youth among them, need a kind of employment which provides income and which satisfies both intellectual and social needs. We know now that the employment problems of youth are many faceted and require a multi-faceted approach.

Mark Battle

For example, we know that some people are unable to qualify for specific jobs because they lack specific skills. However, we now know that often it is not just a matter of teaching the skill. There is no question that a particular person can learn the skill but whether or not he learns may depend on how he is taught, who teaches him, the nature of the tools, or the reaction of his friends or family to his learning that skill.

In other words--we have learned it is essential to see and to deal with the total person.

To accomplish this with youths and adults, the U. S. Department of Labor has come up with an employment preparation package. This package includes: recruitment, counseling, make-up education, job orientation and training, work experience, health services, legal services, consumer education, family planning information, citizenship education, day-care centers, job development, job placement, and follow-up counseling. In other words, the whole bit. This effort to deal with the total person is being carried out through the concentrated employment program of the U. S. Department of Labor in cooperation with all Federal and local agencies that can provide necessary resources.

The employment preparation package--at its best--contains not only those broad-gauged ingredients but those specific ingredients that respond to individual differences. If a rural youth who moves to the city cannot get to a job interview because he doesn't know how to use the bus system, then his particular employment preparation package should include such counseling. But let's not forget that such information gaps are not peculiar to rural kids. There's many a youngster born right here in D.C. who doesn't get to the interview for the same reason.

The success of the employment preparation package requires that it be both flexible, encompassing and oriented to people. One of its most important aspects is that it is viewed as a continual process--a continuum onto which an individual can move at any point in his development.

Perhaps the idea I really want to share today is this: Let us not, in our eagerness to help rural young people, so fragment the helping vehicles that we forget that there is a target; namely, young people. Let us not in urgency to categorize the geographical antecedents of youth, fail to prepare him for the central factors in his geographical future.

Simply to underline the issue to consider! What is a city? Planners may tell us a city is buildings, complexes, graphs, and topographical maps, sewers, garbage collection, water and air pollution. Others may tell us a city is automobiles, sidewalks, traffic jams, and freeways, industry and welfare. Some claim a city is a headache of administration, taxes, beauracracy, and laws.

None of these answers satisfied me for somewhere in the kaleidoscope of

city pieces and systems, the one central ingredient is people. You know this idea is not original with me. Men thousands of years ago were debating the question, "What is a city?" And there were people then who said the same thing I just said to you.

A Greek orator delivered a speech on the island of Rhodes once when the city question was being hotly debated there. He said, "Not houses finely roofed or the stones of walls well built, nor canals and dockyards make a city, but men able to use their opportunity."

That is what I wish to say to you today. Not adjustments nor skyscrapers nor sewers nor migration make a city, but in the context of this conference, youth able to use their opportunity. And the forces that enable a youth to use his opportunity are not primarily dependent on the geographical location, "from whence he came," but rather the people who have and will influence him.